

Dvar Torah for Parshat Noach

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Based on Chayei Moharan #37 (Tzaddik #163)

Last week's reading included this verse, "...and [God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7); this week's has: "All in whose nostrils was a life-giving breath ...died" (ibid. 7:22). So I'm sharing this rendering:

A manuscript the Rebbe wrote in his youth:

One who wants to return to God must certainly make himself a new being. By sighing he does exactly that.

A person never rests from breathing; he constantly breathes, exhaling and inhaling air. This is the basis of life.

The breath has its roots above. There is the tzaddik's good breath and the villain's vile breath. The tzaddik constantly draws air from the holy; the villain draws air from impurity. One who wants to return must see to it that vile air no longer enters him. Therefore he should sigh.

Sighing is extending the breath when inhaling and when exhaling. This intentional extension of the inhale resembles (Psalms 104:29), "You [God] add to their breath, they perish." At death the inhaled breath is greatly increased. Then the person dies and the breath leaves him.

The same when one sighs: he takes in more air than usual and then is "cut off" from the air—that is, he unties himself from the thread of impure air and binds himself to the thread of pure air in order to receive air and vitality from the pure air. Thus, by sighing over his sins, a person unties himself from the root of impurity and binds himself to the root of holiness. One's return from impurity to holiness is one aspect of returning; in this way he receives new vitality.

In addition, the body is renewed. Our Sages, of blessed memory, taught (Berakhot 58b), "Sighing breaks a person's entire body."

This explains the verse (Ecclesiastes 8:14), "There is a hevel (literally, vanity, air) done upon the earth: there are tzadikim to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are villains to whom it happens according to the deeds of the tzaddikim." Namely, there are tzaddikim who commit grave sins because of the air. They regret their earlier behavior and sigh for having done right actions. These sighs cut them off from the root of pure air, binding them to the impure air, which makes them sin.

The reverse is also true. When sinners perform great mitzvot ala tzaddikim, it is because of the air, namely the sigh they made because of their bad deeds. With a sigh they bind themselves to the good air.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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